

2022 Water, Environment & Transport Conference UNISON FINAL AGENDA

Brighton Centre

12 Jun 2022

Negotiating and Bargaining

1. Hybrid working good or bad or a 3-tier workforce?

Water, Environment & Transport Conference 2022 notes that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic some employers have introduced “hybrid working” arrangements for some of its employees. This is not to be confused with the right to apply for flexible working!

Some of our members see hybrid working as a benefit as this gives the members additional work life balance and assists carer responsibilities.

However, we need to be aware that hybrid working arrangements haven't been given to all UNISON members, for example operational or contact centre members, in some cases effectively introducing a 3 tier workforce.

UNISON calls on the WET SGE to survey branches to understand the extent of hybrid working within the WET Service Group to understand if branches have negotiated specific policies and issue appropriate guidance to branches to enable them to effectively support all UNISON members via best practice.

United Utilities

2. Increasing diversity within transport

Conference picture someone working in transport, and you are likely to mentally summon up an image of a white, middle-aged male. Although a lack of diversity isn't unique to transport, it is an issue that needs solving.

While the situation is improving, it's not changing fast enough, recent events have rightly woken up the world up to racial disparity once more. The good news is, there are things the industry can do to improve diversity, while also providing a better service to its customers.

Access to public transport, divided along racial lines, inspired young West Indian men in the UK, including Roy Hackett, Guy Bailey, and Paul Stephenson, to lead the Bristol Bus Boycott of 1963 against the Bristol Omnibus Company for refusing to employ non-white drivers. At the time, it was not illegal in the UK to discriminate against a person because of their colour. The protests ended the company's “colour bar” and inspired the UK's Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968.

More than half a century later, in some parts of transport, too little has changed. In a 2019 report by Aslef on diversity in the transport sector describes “Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) representation in the industry as “woefully low”.

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Very few Black students enter the industry, so there's a problem in terms of getting from education into the sector. Transport is overwhelmingly white, either when you're talking about policy, or roles within intelligent transport. It's hard to find black leaders, it's hard to visualise career progression, and it's hard to map out your career without that.

Conference calls on the WET Service Group Executive to

1. Work with NBMC and Higher Education SGE to encourage more Black students to enter the transport industry,
2. Encourage WET workplaces to follow best practice in diversifying recruitment campaigns,
3. Provide WET workplaces with a list of Black media to potentially publicise their vacancies.

National Black Members' Committee

3. UNISON recognition by Defra

A number of posts within the Environment Agency have been transferred to the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) over the past few years. Also, some new Environment Agency vacancies are advertised as Defra posts.

UNISON has strong representation on behalf of our members in the Environment Agency.

- 1) We are entitled to elect representatives to the Water, Environment and Transport Service Group to speak up on behalf of our members.
- 2) Our Environment Agency Sector Group brings together our Environment Agency branches to decide policy and appoints representatives to negotiate with EA Management at our National Negotiating Group.
- 3) Our strong UNISON branches within the Environment Agency work hard on behalf of our members. We negotiate, on their behalf, with EA management at national, regional, and local levels. We defend our members in disciplinary, grievance, bullying and harassment, discrimination cases, and on any other issues.

We do not have a full recognition agreement with Defra.

The Environment Agency Sector Group is not represented at Trade Union Side meetings with Defra management, we have to rely on PCS to negotiate on behalf of our members.

UNISON Branch Officers and Stewards cannot represent our UNISON Environment Agency employees in Defra posts if they have an issue. They must be represented by a UNISON regional officer.

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As more and more Environment Agency posts become Defra employees, our Environment Agency Sector Group and our UNISON EA branches will become more undermined and weakened. Branches, indeed UNISON itself, will become irrelevant to our UNISON members within the Environment Agency.

Our past experience, regarding Environment Agency members subject to TUPE from the EA to other organisations, shows that it is essential that UNISON has full recognition in order to protect our members and their working conditions.

This motion calls on the Service Group Executive, to work with the EA Sector Committee to employ every means to achieve full recognition by Defra on behalf of our UNISON members in the Environment Agency, seeking intervention by the TUC if required.

Environment Agency Anglian

4. Encouraging STEM subject study to increase numbers of women working in technical roles in WET

Research shows that at GCSE level engagement in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects has a broadly similar gender split. At this level female students are achieving higher or equal average A*-C grades compared to males.

At A Level this drops off with a higher number of males taking up STEM subjects, for example only 20% of A Level physics students are female. Despite this, female students are outperforming males by gaining proportionally higher A*-C grades at A Level.

At Undergraduate level there is an even starker difference - the majority of Engineering and Technology and Computer Science students are male. The proportion of male undergraduates in these subject areas has remained stubbornly above 75% for at least the last five years.

This is a problem because the UK economy is losing talent which could be nurtured and developed. It is a particular problem for WET employers. Surveys show the number of women registered as engineers and technicians (i.e. CEng, IEng, EngTech) with professional bodies dropped from 6% to 5% of the total in 2017. The UK has the lowest percentage of female engineering professionals in Europe, at less than 10%, while Latvia, Bulgaria and Cyprus lead with nearly 30%.

The lack of women in technical roles in WET employers contributes to some very wide gender pay gaps, for example, Affinity Water Ltd has a gap of 29.2 %. This compares with the gap for all employees in 2021 of just over 15%.

UNISON wants to see more women in technical jobs in WET. Research by Mckinsey's shows that gender diverse organisations outperform those with less diversity. Encouraging females into fields where they have talent will help to stimulate growth in STEM workplaces. It will also have a positive impact on gender pay gaps.

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Early work with girls in schools has demonstrated that it can encourage their participation in STEM subjects and retain those who show a talent. Bursaries and sponsorship are also proven ways to encourage uptake of a subject. Apprenticeships in STEM areas, promoted to women, also encourage uptake. This is important if we are to reduce the gender pay gap.

This conference therefore calls upon the WET Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Make closing the gender pay gap a priority in bargaining strategies with WET employers, aiming to get employers to examine their gender pay gap and develop action plans to close gaps, including
 - a) Outreach to schools to encourage girls to see the opportunities in a technical job and to study STEM subjects and
 - b) Bursaries and apprenticeships promoted to women WET organisations.
- 2) Work with the Labour Link to lobby the UK Government to promote STEM subject study to girls.

National Women's Committee

5. Safety of UNISON members attending reservoir incidents

This Water, Environment & Transport Conference notes that during the spring, summer and autumn UNISON members are regularly asked to attend anti-social incidents at reservoirs in their roles as Catchment Controllers.

Of particular concern are out of hours call outs to deal with drunken behaviour usually but not exclusively by youths who can be under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs.

A large population of Catchment Controllers in United Utilities and presumably elsewhere in the Water Industry are Women bringing its own safety issues and despite policies being agreed on safety with the employer such as pairing up our members are still unnecessarily put at risk.

Often, nearby members of the public contact the police who won't get involved so then contact the employer who try to get our members to respond despite the time of day to alleviate the concerns of the public.

UNISON calls on the WET SGE to work with UNISON's Health & Safety section to devise a best practice do's and don'ts template including the need for up to date risk assessments to prevent our members from being put at risk.

United Utilities

6. Fair Pay in the EA

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This conference is extremely concerned to note that pay in the Environment Agency has fallen in real terms by more than 20% over the last 11 years and a number of the Agency's functions are chronically underfunded. This is leading to the following:

- 1) Staff are leaving the Agency at an unprecedented rate
- 2) Surveys by the Agency of its workforce and by UNISON of its members both clearly show that significantly improving pay in the Agency is what a large majority of people feel should be a top priority
- 3) The Agency is struggling to recruit to many posts at all levels in the organisation. Vacancy rates are the highest they have been for years, as is internal churn
- 4) Those staff who remain are under ever-increasing pressure to cover for vacancies and COVID-19 related absences and mental health and well-being scores in the Agency staff survey show a decline after several years of steady improvement
- 5) Members are seriously worried about the future: some have recently had their leased cars taken away, others may have to face that later this year and everyone is dreading the impact of higher National Insurance contributions and huge hikes in energy prices
- 6) Morale in many parts of the organisation is very low due to a combination of personal financial pressures, a lack of opportunity to progress and frustration at the Agency being unable to carry out what many see as its core duties. COVID-19 has just added an extra layer of worry and difficulty.

This conference calls upon the Service Group Executive to:

- I) Work with the Environment Agency Sector Committee to support increased pressure, on the Agency to be robust in its demands for adequate funding from Defra and to challenge damaging Government pay policy
- II) Vigorously support the pay campaign being run by UNISON in the EA, which is being undertaken in conjunction with the other recognised trade unions
- III) Work with UNISON's Labour Link and other external organisation as appropriate to help to secure wider political support for the campaign and raise its profile.

Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive

Campaigning

7. Dumping of sewage by Water Companies in watercourses

Water, Environment & Transport Conference 2022 is appalled by the regular dumping of raw sewage in watercourses by Water Companies.

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Conference welcomes the recent fine of £90m to Southern Water for totally unnecessary pollution of beaches in the South of England and hopes this will act as a deterrent for other Water Companies to do likewise.

Former lead singer of the Undertones, Feargal Sharkey has now rebranded himself as an environmental campaigner highlighting this issue which has an adverse effect on wild swimmers and river wildlife.

Other Water Companies have also been guilty of raw sewage discharges and UNISON believes this will continue until the farcical self-regulation of Water Companies is stopped.

We call upon the WET SGE to work with all regulators and the opposition political parties to the current Government to try and embarrass them into yet another U turn on this issue to stop this disgusting activity.

United Utilities

8. Transport – A Strategic Utility

Conference notes that Transport for Greater Manchester is on the road to introducing franchised bus services across the region, putting it in line with Transport for London. Although franchising is infinitely better than the feral free market that dominates public transport across most of the country, it is only a commissioning process – which leaves many of our members still working largely within the private sector.

Just like the provision of water and the protection of our environment, public transport needs a strategic approach that integrates across the needs of the travelling public both nationally and regionally and within countries, cities and towns. A properly integrate public transport network – including active travel, highways, buses and trains is not just a 'nice to have', in the battle against climate change and the quest to become carbon neutral, it is an imperative.

Our members working within the transport industry need to know they are working in a unionised industry with properly negotiated terms and conditions and employers who are accountable to democratic process, not to their shareholders.

The only way that this can happen is via the public ownership of public transport. Therefore, this conference calls on the WET SGE to:

- 1) Collate information that can be developed into a dossier which demonstrates the advantages v disadvantages of the integration of strategic public ownership of transport networks to be shared with our members employed in the industry and to the public.
- 2) To work with our friends and colleagues in organisations such as the Campaign for Better Transport to promote the advantages of a publicly run transport network.

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- 3) To work with UNISON's Labour Link to ensure that public ownership of public transport is kept high on the agenda within the Labour Party.

Yorkshire - Humberside Region

9. WET Climate Crisis – Doing Our Bit

The world is facing a terrible threat, not only affecting our way of life and those of the billions across the globe, but also animal and plant life – as witnessed by the destruction of coral reefs due to ocean warming and drought and bush fires destroying hundreds of hectares of woodland.

The water industry, transport and the Environment Agency branches all have a vested interest in reducing our reliance on carbon-based energy. This conference recognises that the WET service group needs to do its bit in reducing our carbon footprint. Therefore, this conference asks that the Service Group Executive:

1. Explore ways in which WET branches can encourage their employers to work together to share facilities – such as EV charging points – to minimise their carbon footprint.
2. Explore ways in which WET branches, both regionally and nationally, can work together to minimise their carbon footprints.
3. Produce a guide to branches on possible ideas, case studies, methods on best practice in minimising branches' and their employers' carbon footprint.

Yorkshire - Humberside Region

10. Public Transport in the Post-Covid Era

As we emerge from the pandemic, usage of buses is 70-80% of the 2019 level. The figures for rail travel and tram journeys are slightly below that level. Transport companies are facing greater staff shortages than at any time during the pandemic. This is a result of staff leaving for alternative jobs, such as Heavy Goods Vehicles drivers or working in warehouses, and increased absences due to illness and self-isolation. This has led to temporary reduction in frequency or suspension of services.

The Government have announced their future plans for transport. The rail network is based on 90% of the pre-COVID-19 network. Their vision for buses is laid out in the UK Bus Strategy, Bus Back Better. This promises a London style network for the rest of the country, with daytime buses up to every 10 minutes, more evening and Sunday services and cheaper fares with multi-modal tickets. There was very little guidance on how this was going to be achieved.

Wales and Scotland have a more defined pathway. Wales is looking for a franchised network of bus services throughout the nation. Scotland have extended their Network Support Grant through to 2023 to help bus operators recover from the pandemic. They have also introduced free travel for everyone under 22.

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In England, different funds are available for the metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas, with all authorities submitting bids. The metropolitan areas also have the added pressures of financing their rail and tram networks. The non-metropolitan areas drawing up Bus Service Improvement Plans and introducing enhanced partnerships with operators to ensure access to funding. These plans amount to 7 times the funding available. The emphasis is on bus priority measures and capital infrastructure projects, the Department for Transport discouraging the use of funds to maintain existing networks.

The reality is highlighted by the changing demographics, with increased working from home and different shopping habits reducing the need to travel. There is little funding available for maintaining the pre-COVID-19 network. There is the prospect of the temporary frequency reductions and suspension of services becoming permanent. Transport for London (TfL) is fighting off bankruptcy, resulting in UNISON helping our members fight proposed changes to their pensions and TfL raising the qualifying age for free concessionary travel. There is no clear expectation of the role public transport will play in the levelling-up agenda. All this means is that our members working in transport face an increasingly uncertain future.

Conference calls on the Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive to work with branches and other appropriate bodies, including the National Executive Council and Labour Link to:

- (i) Provide support and guidance to help defend the jobs of our members working in transport and protect their terms and conditions, including pensions.
- (ii) Campaign for a fully funded, comprehensive and sustainable public transport network throughout the nations of the United Kingdom, which will give our members working in transport increased job security.

Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive

11. Young workers, burnout and the Right to Disconnect: the negative impact of remote digital work on young members' well-being during the Covid-19 pandemic

This Conference notes that, even before the pandemic, mental health and stress at work were among the leading issues raised by young workers.

Conference notes that the pandemic has only exacerbated young workers' concerns about mental health, whether that is due to working in stressful conditions on the front line, or due to isolation from friends, family and support networks. A UNISON survey of young members in 2020 found that over 85% of young members said their mental health was 'seriously affected' or 'slightly affected' by the Covid-19 pandemic. Although the number of responses from members in the Water, Environment and Transport service group was small, this pattern was reflected in their responses.

In particular, the huge rise in working from home in an era of digital connectivity has blurred the boundaries for many between work and home life, with a negative impact on wellbeing and work/life balance.

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This Conference notes that the Right to Disconnect is the ability to not engage in work-related electronic communications such as e-mails or messages during non-work hours.

Conference believes that mental health is a workplace issue which must be addressed by trade unions in negotiations with employers and by direct support for affected workers.

Therefore, this Conference asks the WET Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Work with the National Young Members Forum (NYMF) to campaign and raise the impact of the Right to Disconnect on wellbeing with young members in the WET service group;
- 2) Support WET branches in negotiating with employers to produce clear guidelines and policies on work/life balance and the Right to Disconnect, and consider producing bargaining guidance on this;
- 3) Identify and share examples of successful negotiation in WET branches in establishing policies which support positive work/life balance and staff's Right to Disconnect;
- 4) Promote UNISON's updated mental health bargaining advice to branches in the WET Service Group.

National Young Members' Forum

12. Mental health of key workers in the Water Industry

Conference, during the COVID-19 pandemic water industry workers started to hear the terminology that they were key workers.

Conference notes the huge impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on mental health, whether on staff working under stressful conditions, people isolated from friends and family by lockdown measures, the physical impact of the virus itself, or the continuing uncertainty due to changing and unreliable government advice and public health policies.

Conference notes that many members working in the water industry have come under intense pressure over the last year to keep the water flowing. During this time workers' have suffered mental health issues because they have experienced isolation and separation from chosen families and support networks, have experienced burnout as a result of highly pressured workplaces and in some cases have worked additional hours to cover shifts.

Conference recognises that mental health is a workplace issue which must be addressed by trade unions, both in negotiations with employers and by direct support for affected workers.

This conference calls upon the Service Group Executive to:

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- 1) Promote UNISON's bargaining advice on mental health;
- 2) Support branches in working with employers to negotiate positive workplace policies addressing and supporting staff mental health;
- 3) Share examples of best practice and successes in negotiating supportive policies and procedures such as sickness absence policies and policies on reasonable adjustments;
- 4) Encourage and support members to become health and safety representatives, and promote UNISON's safety campaigns.

Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive

13. Flood defences in private ownership – a disaster waiting to happen

This conference notes that in October 2021 the Guardian reported that a third of England's vital flood defences are in private hands with more than 1,000 found to be in a poor state and some 'at risk' of complete performance failure. Private owners cannot be forced to make upgrades to the defences, which can involve bills of hundreds of thousands of pounds. The government admits it can only 'encourage' third-party owners to do maintenance. Even The Environment Agency only have powers to carry out emergency repairs if there is a risk to people, property, or the environment and then they are left to try and bill the freeholders afterwards. Some defences are owned by major landowners such as the crown estate or Network Rail. Others run under private houses and businesses, often unnoticed until something goes wrong. Even when local authorities do know the owners, we cannot compel them to carry out repairs, all we can do is 'ask nicely'. But the truth is nobody knows who owns or maintains a high proportion of private flood defences in England.

High-consequence flood defences are the most important because they contribute to managing flood risk in a location where the consequence on people and property of an asset failing is high. With increased flooding one of the greatest risks facing the UK as a result of the climate crisis, the government announced £5.2bn to build 2,000 new flood and coastal risk management schemes. Private defence owners will not be eligible to receive any of this money and the funding does not cover maintenance or repairs to existing flood defences. We know that the climate crisis is making our winters wetter, increasing the risk of floods across the country. We've had warning of the climate threat for years so there's no excuse for not being prepared.

Private ownership of these crucial public assets is not ideal. It would obviously be far better to have things that were public assets owned by the public so that they can be managed in a coherent way. As our winters get wetter, the climate emergency will put flood defences under greater strain.

Conference believes that maintenance of flood defences is a public service and should be the responsibility of a government agency with workers on national terms and conditions. This agency should grant recognition to UNISON for collective bargaining.

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Conference calls on the Service Group Executive to campaign for public ownership of these vital defences to ensure there are clear responsibilities and adequate measures in place so that any flood defences which are privately owned and critically important to the protection of the public are properly inspected and maintained and if not then taken into public ownership.

Conference further calls on the Service Group Executive to meet with UNISON Labour Link and discuss how the aims of this motion can be incorporated into Labour Party policy and delivered by the next Labour Government.

East Midlands I.D.B

14. Make 2022 the Year of Disabled Workers in WET workplaces

Conference notes that UNISON has declared 2022 the year of disabled workers, which is a great opportunity for WET branches to organise, bargain and campaign on the issues that matter to our disabled members and to increase recruitment and retention as a result.

WET branches can use 2022 to highlight the experience of our disabled members, the value they bring to our union and to WET workplaces, and to negotiate improved policies with WET employers, including reasonable adjustment passports and disability leave policies.

Conference notes the resources available on the UNISON website, including:

- 1) Reasonable Adjustment Bargaining Guide, including model policy and 'passport'
- 2) Disability Leave bargaining guide
- 3) Stewards guides to representing disabled members and to representing Deaf (BSL user) members
- 4) Quick Guides to Access to Work and to Reasonable Adjustments
- 5) Becoming a branch disabled members officer

Conference calls on the service group executive to work with the National Disabled Members Committee to:

- a) Include the Year of Disabled Workers in their ongoing work programme
- b) Promote the year of Disabled Workers to WET regions and branches, encouraging them to include work in this area in their work plans for the year
- c) Encourage all WET branches to elect a branch disabled members officer and promote UNISON's national training on becoming a branch disabled members' officer
- d) Include reasonable adjustment passports and disability leave policies on the national negotiating agendas with WET employers

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National Disabled Members Committee

15. Properly Fund Our Environmental Protection Agencies.

This conference notes that the ambitious environmental rhetoric used by all governments in the UK stands in direct opposition to the long-term fall in resources and support for the country's environmental protection agencies which regulate and enforce environmental legislation.

Why action is needed:

For over a decade, our environmental protection agencies have been subject to cut or frozen budgets most years, with barely any respite. In a greening world where the public looks to governments to step up and fight the challenges of climate change, pollution, plastic waste and biodiversity loss, one of the major tools at their disposal to keep polluters in check is being dismantled piece by piece. Cuts to frontline staff numbers and training, reduced inspections and enforcement action are grinding down morale of the staff that are left. Continual erosion of the Agency's abilities to carry out their core functions will help guarantee that the UK will not have an environment fit for this and future generations.

This decade is a critical one for environmental protections – from meeting carbon targets to avert the worst effects of climate change, to preventing a collapse of the planet's biodiversity. This country needs environmental protection fit for the 21st century.

Action sought:

Conference calls on the Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive, working with the NEC, Regions and other stakeholders to:

1. Campaign for a year-on-year increase of the Agency's budgets over the next decade to redress the cuts imposed since the 2008 financial crash.
2. Campaign for assurances that restored funding makes its way to the services that need it most and is used effectively. It is time to close the UK's enforcement gap, and to return to an approach to policymaking focused on prevention rather than cure.

Scottish Env. Prot. Agency

16. Changes to the Constitution of the Water, Environment and Transport (WET) Service Group

Conference notes that the proposed revisions to the WET constitution have been overseen by the WET Executive and in particular by the policy sub-group, which is made up of representatives of all WET sectors. The key changes to the constitution can be found on:

- a. Page 2, sub-section 3.3: Sector seats reduced to 3 instead of 4. To reflect 3 sectors (Water, Environment and Transport) of the service group.

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- b. Page 3, sub-section 3.4: Transport seats amended to increase to 5 seats elected from membership group, with 1 seat appointed from the sector group committee
- c. Page 3, sub-section 4.1; Transport seats revised to be elected to on the basis of 1 Male seat, 1 Female seat, 3 General seats
- d. Page 3, sub-section 5.1: Clarity to the NEC role to ensure it aligns with UNISON rules.
- e. Page 10, sub-section 10.2: 'Services' changed to 'Sectors'

The Constitution is included with the conference papers as Appendix A.

This motion calls on conference to approve the proposed changes to the WET constitution as set out above, and for the WET Executive to communicate the proposed changes to the NEC to seek final approval.

Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive

17. Water, Environment & Transport H&S Seminar 2022

This Water, Environment & Transport Conference recognises the value previous pre-pandemic Health and Safety (H&S) Seminars have brought to UNISON Activists in undertaking their roles.

We call upon the WET SGE to organise a 1 day H&S Seminar late in 2022 centred around the pandemic covering lessons learnt and what went right and what went wrong with the way employers in our Service Group dealt with COVID-19.

The opportunity should also be taken to cover non pandemic H&S issues that have occurred in WET workplaces since the last H&S Seminar.

United Utilities

18. Trans equality in WET – louder and prouder!

The toxic debate ignited by the United Kingdom government's consultation on reforming the Gender Recognition Act underlined the importance of our union, including branches in the Water, Environment and Transport service group, supporting and representing our Trans members effectively.

Attacks on Trans rights have escalated further in the past year. There has been a sustained attack on Stonewall's Trans inclusive Diversity Champions programme, which some employers in WET may be members of, and repeated false claims that Stonewall is misinterpreting the Equality Act's protected characteristic of gender reassignment in its advice to organisations.

The tactics being used, particularly the vilification of Trans women, by those campaigning to roll back the existing rights of Trans people, including 'gender critical' and anti-Trans groups, are almost identical to the tactics seen around the time of

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Section 28, when gay men were portrayed as sexual predators and a danger to children to spread fear and mistrust.

There is also growing evidence that the concerted international campaign against Trans people is linked to far right and religious-right groups. Targeting a minority, and spreading false information to provoke hatred and distrust by preying on people's fears, are classic far right recruitment tactics.

Conference acknowledges that Trans members in the service group may be experiencing discrimination and transphobia and/or feeling that their workplace is not a safe place to disclose their gender identity.

Conference therefore recognises the need for our union, including the WET service group, to become more visible and more vocal – louder and prouder - in supporting and promoting Trans equality.

This must include the Service Group Executive continuing to encourage the negotiation of inclusive language in agreements and policies, and of inclusive practices and procedures, across the service group, but there are some practical steps that branches can take alongside this.

Some workplaces already use pronouns on name badges, ID cards and email signatures, but not many. If more did, this would help alleviate the awkward questions that some Trans and non-binary members can face on a day to day basis, and also allow other members to show their understanding of the importance of respecting people's pronouns. Conference therefore welcomes the UNISON 'Why pronouns are important' factsheet which can be used by branches to raise these issues with employers.

Further, some of our Trans and non-binary members work in contact centres or regularly speak to members of the public by phone as part of their jobs. They can face upsetting assumptions about their gender identity, including hostility and confrontation. Similarly, Trans and non-binary people can face unintentional misgendering on the phone by some staff. Conference therefore welcomes the guidance being produced by the National LGBT+ Committee on the best practice words and phrases for staff to use when dealing with people on the phone, which can then be used to assist in the training of call taking staff and by individual members as a learning resource.

Conference therefore calls on the Water, Environment and Transport Service Group Executive to work with the National LGBT+ Committee and other parts of the union as appropriate to:

- 1) Explore ways to increase the strength and visibility of UNISON's work to promote Trans equality in the service group
- 2) Urge branches to promote the fact sheet 'Why pronouns are important' and to ask employers to adopt a policy that allows all staff to have their pronouns on name badges, ID cards and email signatures

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- 3) Encourage branches to urge employers to join the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme if they are not already members
- 4) Publicise and promote the guidance on best practice in dealing with people on the phone
- 5) Promote the UNISON fact sheet 'How to be a Trans ally' and Trans ally training widely within the service group
- 6) Encourage members in the service group who have been on the Trans ally training to join the Trans ally's network being set up by the National LGBT+ Committee
- 7) Promote materials, when available, to help members in the service group to counter the 'gender critical' narrative and provide information on the links between the gender critical movement in the UK and the far right.

National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus Committee

19. Recruiting, supporting and developing young activists across the Water, Environment and Transport service group

This Conference notes the continuing discrepancy between numbers of young members and numbers of young activists. Conference notes that RMS figures from February 2022 show that only 3.6% of members in the Water, Environment and Transport (WET) Service Group are aged under 27.

Conference notes the specific barriers to young members in becoming active and involved in UNISON. Young members are more likely to experience low pay and precarious employment. They are less likely to be familiar with the ways that trade unions work and their structures, and to feel intimidated or anxious about attending meetings. Young members who are Black, LGBT+, disabled or women may experience multiple barriers to becoming active.

Conference believes that the full participation of young members is vital to the success of the union in developing a sustainable WET activist base for the future and making sure that the voices of young workers are heard across the service group.

Conference asks the WET Service Group Executive to:

- 1) Work with the National Young Members Forum (NYMF) to develop a strategy to increase the numbers of young members and activists across the WET service group;
- 2) Promote the NYMF's report "Getting Active in UNISON" to WET branches who want to develop a plan to increase participation and activity by young members;
- 3) Ask branches across the WET service group to identify and share both challenges and success stories in recruiting and developing young activists;

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- 4) Encourage and support WET branches to develop mentoring and buddying schemes to support new young activists, including promoting UNISON's Learning and Organising Service's (LAOS) resources on mentoring and buddying.

National Young Members' Forum

20. Net zero and LGBT+ members

Conference recalls that the "Net Zero" motion passed at the 2021 WET conference called for the service group to work with all appropriate stakeholders in UNISON to promote policies that support a net zero strategy, including proper funding for a 'Just Transition' and a significant increase in employment in WET alongside new skills and training packages.

Conference recognises that the self-organised groups have an important role to play in raising awareness of the policies being promoted by the service group. It welcomes the motion 'Climate change is an LGBT+ issue' adopted by the 2021 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus (LGBT+) conference, which recognised that we are at a defining moment when it comes to climate change. Its impacts are global in scope and unparalleled, and it is evident that on a global level people who are already most vulnerable and marginalised will experience the greatest impacts of climate change. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report identified LGBT+ communities as one such group.

Conference also notes that UNISON is part of a broad-based civil society coalition, including the TUC, Friends of the Earth and Amnesty International, which is campaigning for a new 'failure to prevent' law that would mandate both companies and the public sector to undertake human rights due diligence across their supply chains, and would hold companies to account when they fail to prevent human rights abuses and environmental damage in their business. This would increase protection for workers, communities, human rights defenders and the environment.

Conference therefore calls on the service group executive to:

- 1) Work with the national LGBT+ committee to raise awareness amongst LGBT+ members on climate change and the policies being promoted by the WET service group to support a just transition
- 2) Work with other sections of the union as appropriate to produce guidance for WET branches on ethical procurement of any goods they purchase (such as computing equipment and furniture)
- 3) Work with other sections of the union as appropriate to produce guidance for WET branches on ways to advocate for ethical procurement policies with employers
- 4) Work with the NEC to support the campaign for a new 'failure to prevent' law

National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender plus Committee